

# COUNSELING FAQS

## **What is telehealth / on-line counseling?**

Telehealth or on-line counseling is a professional counseling session via video where we see each other and talk with each other in a virtual face-to-face setting (similar to Skype). This platform offers you the convenience of receiving professional counseling services wherever you are through a computer, tablet or smartphone with a reliable Internet connection. To talk with me via video, you will need to schedule a session by calling me at 210-714-1442. I will then prompt you to start the video session. After you confirm, we will immediately begin video chatting.

## **Is asking for help a sign of weakness?**

It takes a great deal of emotional strength to seek help for problems that may be too overwhelming to manage alone. Asking for professional help does not mean that something is “wrong” with you. The most emotionally stable people are those who have had the courage and determination to work on improving themselves.

## **How is therapy different than talking to my friends?**

1. A therapist, unlike a friend, will not talk about his or her own problems since the focus of the therapeutic relationship is on you. 2. A therapist will be objective. Because they do not have a personal relationship with you the way a friend does, they will not be influenced by personal feelings. 3. Although it often may feel like a casual conversation, the therapist may ask questions during your session to help you uncover meaning and reflect on life experiences and how those have shaped your current situation. They may help you make connections to discover hidden emotions. They may help you look at your thoughts and how your self-talk contributes to your feelings.

## **How can therapy help me?**

I will assess the problem and work with you to identify your personal goals for counseling and assist you in moving towards your goals. I will assess your strengths and the way those strengths can be used to support you while taking in to account the cultural context of your issues. Therapy will help you stop destructive thought processes and self-sabotaging behaviors, process difficult experiences and memories, and learn healthy coping tools.

## **How much do the counseling sessions cost?**

Sessions are \$63 per 45-minute session, prepaid by Visa, Mastercard, Discover, or American Express.

## **Do you take insurance, and how does that work?**

Even though I am empaneled with Traditional Medicaid, Superior Medicaid, Community First, Ambetter and United Healthcare Insurance, online counseling is generally not covered. It is important that you contact member services before each session to see exactly the coverage you will get. The fee of \$63 is paid upfront and you have the option to file for reimbursement with your insurance company.

Coverage and benefits for counseling and therapy change from one health insurance company to another and from plan to plan, but generally the following rules apply:

- ✚ With many health insurance plans, coverage can be partial or very limited.
- ✚ Even if your plan covers all your costs, the co-pay that you would be required to contribute may be higher than my fee.
- ✚ In many cases, before you can get reimbursed by your insurance company, your therapist would have to diagnose you with a mental disorder or issue. This diagnosis would be sent to the insurance company and recorded in your medical file. In some cases, the therapist would also have to provide additional clinical information to the insurance company, such as treatment plans, summaries or copies of the entire record.

If you consider using your health insurance, please check your coverage carefully by asking the following questions:

- ❖ Do I have mental health insurance benefits to cover online counseling?
- ❖ What is my deductible and has it been met?

- ❖ How many sessions per year does my health insurance cover?
- ❖ What is the coverage amount per therapy session?
- ❖ Is approval required from my primary care physician?

Please note that my fee is comparable with the co-pays of most insurance plans.

### **How long does counseling last?**

I have seen counseling last from 3 sessions to years. It really depends on the client's needs and the consistency of their attendance.

### **How long is a counseling session?**

Each session will last about 45 minutes.

### **What can I expect at the first appointment?**

Before our first session you should print and fill out the forms under "Getting Started." If you can complete those documents before the first session, we can get started on your presenting problem(s) as soon as you arrive. I will review these documents with all involved in the first counseling session and cover any questions you might have.

### **Does what we talk about in therapy remain confidential?**

Yes. I am ethically and legally bound to respect confidentiality. The law and professional ethics require therapists to maintain confidentiality except for a few situations involving the law and safety. We will review confidentiality before we begin your therapy.

### **How do I sign up for counseling?**

If you are interested in counseling, please call 210-714-1442 to make an appointment for an intake.

### **Do you offer same-day appointments?**

Time permitting, I can do a same-day appointment. However, if you are suicidal or homicidal, you should go to the hospital nearest you.

### **Can I get a hardship letter (or for reduced work load, etc.)?**

Providing letters of documentation is a service that must occur within the context of an on-going therapeutic relationship. I do not provide letters based solely on an intake/initial visit. There are some types of letters that are outside the scope of my services, including disability or accommodation assessments and letters related to service or support animals. The fee for a letter is \$50.

### **Can I get a prescription for medicine?**

No, while I cannot prescribe medication, upon receiving your written consent, I am willing and able to work in conjunction with your physician or psychiatrist to ensure you are getting the best treatment possible.

### **What is the difference between counseling and therapy?**

The terms "counseling" and "therapy" have different meanings but are often used to describe the same activity. Both counseling and therapy involve talking with a trained professional -- many are also licensed by the state in which they work, as am I. Counseling is the process by which a counselor helps an individual understand and solve problems to help him or her cope with mental or emotional stressors. For example, counseling generally works to find solutions to specific immediate problems such as learning how to positively communicate in relationships with others. Therapy usually involves talking about your situation in order to gain more understanding about issues such as mood, feelings, behavior, and ways of thinking. For example, therapy can help you learn how to find meaning in your cancer experience.